

# **Language Policy**

## **Antietam Elementary School, 2020-2021**



### **Philosophy**

Our vision at Antietam is that “The world is our community.” Our mission is “to create an atmosphere where our diverse learners will be critical, compassionate, and reflective thinkers focused on personal growth in a global community.” The mission of Prince William County Schools is to provide world-class, rigorous, and engaging instruction that prepares students to be responsible global citizens. At Antietam ES we support the division philosophy that students construct meaning through prior knowledge and by making connections. Learning is enhanced through dialogue in oral and written communication. Students are naturally curious thinkers and should be given multiple opportunities to develop their language skills, bridging into a passion for literacy. Students need to read, write, and discuss a variety of texts in order to develop their literacy skills. Language is the major connecting element across the curriculum.

Therefore, the focus is on not only language and literacy, but also on its application across the curriculum and its authentic purpose in today's world. Literacy is implemented as a tool for improvement in a global community and opportunities are provided for students to collaborate regarding global and social constructs of knowledge. The English language arts extend beyond the individual content area to support each of the other content areas and to enhance thinking and learning. The integration of knowledge, skills, and strategies of the English language arts enables students to solve problems and think critically and creatively in all subject areas.

We strive to have a school culture promoting international mindedness and multilingualism. We provide pathways to language acquisition for students in addition to supporting mother tongue languages. We provide support for students to be successful in language acquisition. We encourage students to take action and extend their language learning in ways that help their community. We ensure that every discipline includes support mechanisms for language learning, both written and spoken. We promote awareness of one's own language and culture. We believe that language learning is vital for social, emotional and cognitive development.

### **Practice**

At Antietam ES, reading, writing, and oral language instruction is incorporated across all content areas.

#### **Reading**

Language Arts instruction at Antietam ES is provided within the framework of Balanced Literacy. A workshop model is in place for both reading and writing instruction. This allows for focused, direct reading instruction, guided reading instruction, and independent

practice daily.

In order to support our philosophy, a variety of practices will be considered when planning for instruction, which include, but are not limited to: Reader's theater, reading conferences, read aloud, book commercials, classroom libraries, differentiated instruction, Daily Five Model mini-lessons, guided reading, strategy group instruction, student choice in independent reading and projects.

Classroom teachers participate in SPOT training. Virtual resources that we have to support language development for the students include: Raz Kids, Myon, Legends of Learning, Dreambox, Code.org, Kodable, Reading Eggs, Epic, and Benchmark literacy. Physical resources we have to support language development for the students include: classroom libraries and Benchmark Literacy program resources. Students are assessed by the classroom teacher using the DRA/QRI to determine instructional and independent reading levels.

#### Reading Support Services

Antietam ES has implemented several formal and informal support services (human, physical and virtual) that are provided to students as needed, including:

**Reading Specialists** serve as a liaison between the division Language Arts Department and our school. They share information about state and district initiatives, and they support teachers with instructional strategies and assessments through professional development and classroom modeling. In addition, the reading specialists provide supplemental resources and instruction for struggling readers, support students with push-in and pull-out student groups, and report and analyze data. Along with facilitating professional development opportunities for the staff, reading specialists work in partnership with grade level teams in a Collaborative Learning Team environment.

**Intervention team:** Teachers may request a student's progress be monitored by the intervention team if sufficient progress is not being seen in the classroom. The team includes administrators, classroom teachers, parents or guardians, and other support staff as needed, such as a reading specialist, speech therapist, school psychologist or counselor. The team may put in place supports such as: Reading resource small groups conducted by reading specialists, Reading Recovery (4 students, 20 weeks of 1:1 intervention), Lessons in Literacy (2 students at a time, 20 weeks of 1:1 intervention), Reading SOL remediation groups as required by the state, and Reading EGGS, an online reading support for grades K-3.

*Note: during the 2020-2021 school year, there will be no Reading Recovery or Lessons in Literacy interventions.*

**Third Grade Reading Intervention Plan:** Students that do not meet the PALS benchmark by the end of second grade are monitored through a formal intervention plan which is updated by administrators, teachers and parents three times a year throughout third grade. Students are monitored as fourth graders as well if sufficient progress has not been made in third grade.

**Pals Tutoring for Grades K-2:** PALS in K-2 is 100% pull out. The reading specialist and two PALS tutors coordinate schedules for small group instruction. They are required to receive 30 minutes of instruction, 5 days a week. We use research-based programs to guide our instruction. "My Sidewalks" is used in kindergarten and "Leveled Literacy" is used in 1st and 2nd. Each student in 1st and 2nd grade has a take-home book. The primary focus in kindergarten is letter knowledge until the end of the year. They are assessed bi-weekly and data is recorded in a "dashboard" housed in Teams. Students take the official PALS assessment at the beginning, middle (January), and end of year (May).

### Writing

The Language Arts Department has revised the curriculum documents (available in staff communities) where it has broken up reading and writing to help teachers plan appropriately. The LA CLT meets once a week to discuss upcoming units and how we can best serve our students according to the curriculum documents. Writing is done across all curriculum areas. Writing is used to reflect, create story problems, complete research, and show comprehension skills. In order to support our philosophy, a variety of additional practices are considered when planning for instruction, which include, but are not limited to: Writer's Workshop, word study, handwriting (such as Handwriting Without Tears), and development of print for lower grades.

### Oral Language

Our goal for oral language development is for all students to be able to communicate with others verbally. All staff members strive to model proper oral language during instruction, conversation, and reading aloud using a variety of literature. Teachers also invite parents and other members of the community to visit our school to share information about their cultures, careers, and other special interests, and this includes opportunities for students and their families to share their mother tongue. Choral readings, reciting poems, and dramatizing stories across all grade levels provide opportunities for children to practice oral language. Students also practice speaking to their classmates and/or other audiences by sharing reports or projects. Students are also given numerous opportunities to engage in conversation with peers during cooperative learning, at recess, and in the cafeteria. Additionally, fifth grade students organize a school-wide broadcast of the morning announcements over the closed-circuit TV system.

Our Music Specialist plays an important role in increasing students' ability to use oral language. She helps to develop their voices as musical instruments to convey emotions, ideas, and concepts. She gives them opportunities to practice using their voices in a variety of ways, including music from many cultures and, at times, in languages other than English and Spanish. Practice in this way gives students an opportunity to explore oral language in a group without fear of judgment or rejection. Each grade level learns, practices, and performs several songs and/or dramatizations sometime during the school year. The performances are presented to the school during the day and to the school community in the evening. Each performance represents concepts covered in grade-level planners.

Students who are displaying difficulty with oral language skills are referred to the school's

Intervention Team for consideration for speech therapy or other services.

### Additional Language Learning

Spanish is the additional language we learn at Antietam. The study of modern languages enables students to acquire the communicative skills and perspectives necessary to be active members of our multicultural society and to gain a sense of belonging to the global community. Given that language study encompasses literature, geography, history, science, mathematics, the arts, and technology, students gain interdisciplinary perspectives as well as intercultural understanding. Our goal is to create lifelong learners who develop and maintain proficiency in more than one language.

At Antietam, all mainstream and inclusion students receive instruction in the language of Spanish as part of our block schedule and as a IB PYP; Antietam students have a homeroom teacher for grade level and they also receive Encore classes (Spanish, PE, Music, Art and Computers). Students have Spanish instruction for a 45-minute period each class time, which is every 6 days. This frequency averages about 25 hours of total instructional time in a school year. The Spanish teacher is required to teach 90% in the target language (Spanish). Realistically, students are only introduced and exposed to the Spanish language but still creating a balance between all *four domains of language learning*— Reading, Writing, Speaking, & Listening. As a key part of the Spanish language, it is fundamental to integrate the aspect and the enrichment of the Hispanic culture.

### Student Language Agreements

Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, classes will create student language agreements as an extension to their essential agreements to explore the impacts of language on their lives. In the process of creating this, students and teachers will ask and answer questions to explore how we use language and how language impacts us every day. Sample questions are:

1. What languages did you or will you use today?
2. How are languages the same/different?
3. What differences do you find when speaking vs. listening? And reading vs. writing among our languages?
4. What do you like about languages?
5. What choices do you make about languages at school? Outside of school?
6. Do people always say what they are thinking?
7. Can words hurt or heal?
8. Why do you think you go to Spanish class as a special? How do you think it's helping your brain to learn a new language?

9. How is language the same/different when we use technology?

10. How does the learner profile use language? (How would someone who is caring/reflective/risk-taking/etc. use language?)

11. Is it possible to communicate without language?

### Media Services

**Library / Computer Lab:** The mission of the Antietam ES library is to provide resources and activities that foster inquiry and a love of literature while assisting students and staff in becoming effective users of information. The Antietam ES library is a central space for students and teachers to read, write, create, and research. The librarian is available during flex time (half of the encore rotation schedule) to schedule time with classrooms to work on research projects. The librarian plans with grade levels to develop projects that support classroom inquiries. During the other half of the encore rotation, the library is included in the encore/specials rotation. During the designated class time with single-subject specialists (such as library and PE), the librarian works with students to develop research skills and to promote literature and also uses the county language arts curriculum to reinforce and extend concepts taught in the classroom. Also included in library lessons are both the AASL Standards framework as well as county technology standards. The library is equipped with a wide range of fiction and nonfiction books, a reference section and two computer desktop stations. The computer stations are used to promote student independence as library patrons. The library also has a designated laptop cart. This laptop cart has internet access with access to several databases including PebbleGo, PebbleGo Next, World Book Online, Brain Pop, Brain Pop Jr., and Discovery Education.

Antietam ES has two computer labs for classrooms to access in support of classroom inquiries. A technology coach (ITC) is available to advise and support teachers on effective uses of technology for learning.

**Book Room:** The trade book room, connected to the library, is stocked with leveled, classroom sets of books to support reading across the curriculum. Teachers can check out the classroom sets for guided reading and reading across the curriculum. The room is maintained by the reading specialists.

### Diversity of Language Needs

**Parent Communication:** Antietam communicates with the parents in a variety of ways. We use virtual communication: SeeSaw, email, school website postings, and Twitter. Written communication in the form of flyers, handouts and mailings are also used. We also communicate through phone calls and Robocalls. We have translation services available for both written and verbal communication. Written communication through SeeSaw can be translated into home languages. Upon registration, each family is asked in what language they would like communication from the school. After receiving this information, the school

provides communication with that family in the requested language. A record of any communication with families in languages other than English is kept by the secretary in a translation log.

**Parent Resources:** Parents want ways to support their child at home. Ways that the school could support all students and families bridge the school-home connection are crucial. Some ways a school can strengthen this would be to provide written directions and/or picture directions on how to access online programs the school offers such as those highlighted in Clever. Translate all flyers sent home as well as text communications. Provide questions parents could ask their child as they read at home with translation available. Offer a translated evening event for families to come and learn how they might support their child. Utilize robocalls more often to remind families of upcoming events, and translate when needed. Promote ways that parents can communicate with school staff, i.e. promote the language line.

**Legal Requirements:** As a result of an agreement between PWCS and the DOJ, there are legal requirements for the school to communicate with families who speak a language other than English.

#### English Language Learners (ESOL Program)

The Antietam ES ESOL teachers focus on providing direct support for our ELLs in order for them to be successful in their English academic and social language. The ESOL teachers provide this by addressing the students' specific needs and using the WIDA ACCESS for ELLS English Language Proficiency Test. Based on this information, the ESOL teachers design lessons that focus on students' WIDA Can Do Goals. In order to make the English language accessible and meaningful, the teachers use pictures with English words, sentence frames, manipulatives, and other teaching techniques. Some teaching techniques used include Total Physical Response, Readers Theater, modeling, and guided instruction as well as one-one instruction. ESOL teachers continuously collaborate with classroom teachers to enable all students to access the curriculum.

In addition, the ESOL teachers believe in fostering the students' mother tongues as this is a key part of their academic success. The school provides the students with bilingual picture dictionaries or Word to Word bilingual dictionaries. These tools help students to improve their skills in writing, reading, listening and speaking.

*More information can be found in the Access and Inclusion Policy.*

#### Parents as Educational Partners (PEP) Program

The Prince William County ESOL Department has designed a program, Parents as Educational Partners (PEP), which we have implemented at Antietam ES. This is a program for parents who speak a language other than English at home. The program helps parents navigate the American educational system by comparing it to their native countries' educational systems. PEP also helps them to learn basic English to encourage communication and participation in the school community. PEP helps parents feel more

comfortable at school, which can enhance student learning. Parents are encouraged to become informed and active partners in their children's learning. They are provided resources for academic and social language acquisition resources.

### Mother Tongue Support

Antietam ES students come from many cultures and backgrounds. Approximately 86 percent of students speak English as their mother tongue language, and approximately 14 percent of students speak a mother tongue other than English, primarily Spanish; the majority of these students are not literate in their mother tongue. As described above, Antietam ES has a Parents as Educational Partners (PEP) program to work with these students' parents to promote the importance of literacy in the mother tongue.

As students develop their language skills, Antietam ES ensures that students have opportunities to use their mother tongue. Students are allowed and encouraged to converse with other students and staff for clarification and social purposes in their mother tongue. As part of class discussions, students explore common ground collaboratively, sharing multiple perspectives of their individual experiences and backgrounds. This often takes the form of a student sharing insight into their culture, or a particular word from their mother tongue, that is relevant to the curriculum material being discussed. Students have access to bilingual dictionaries in the classroom as well as more than 300 bilingual books from the school library, with a plan to annually purchase more bilingual books (in Spanish, Japanese and Urdu) through the library collection development plan as outlined in the Antietam ES Action Plan.

Students' family members also have the opportunity during the school year to share their language, culture and heritage. For example, in Kindergarten classes the students and family members are invited to share information about the various holidays they celebrate. Another way Antietam ES plans to support mother tongue within the next school year is to reinstate the Multicultural Festival that the school has hosted in years past. The festival involves students' families displaying items and photos that are meaningful to their heritage and culture, as well as sharing food, music or dance that is important to their heritage. Antietam ES also has hosted a Literacy Night that will be adapted within the next school year to include bilingual books that are read by parents who have a mother tongue other than English.

### Multilingualism

This is a new part of our Language Policy, as Antietam ES school recognizes it as a fact, a right, and a resource for learning. Multilingualism is evidenced in our school environment with flags representing home countries, a heritage/multicultural celebration, a data chart about languages, and a map recognizing families' countries of origin and home language. In addition, the library has books available in numerous languages, and also displays "hello" greetings in different languages.

During the 2020-2021 school year, Antietam will complete the "How multilingual is my school? A Self-Audit Tool." This will help us determine what improvements can be made within the entire school community.

## **Policy Review**

This policy will be shared at the beginning of every year with leadership and then with the staff in an in-person staff meeting the week prior to school starting. It will also be shared with PAC (principal's advisory committee) at the first in-person meeting. Prior to these meetings, the policies will be made available to these stakeholders virtually and will include a Google Form as a survey where they can make comments to be considered to adjust the policy. After approval from these 3 groups, these policies will be available to the community on our school webpage under the IB tab. They will also be stored in the OneDrive for the coordinator to keep track of important school IB documents and be made available to staff in the IB folder in the faculty Teams group in a file titled IB.